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PRESS RELEASE

Macedonia Takes a Decisive Step to Fight Cyber Crime

Skopje, Macedonia – May 25, 2006 – This small Balkan republic may be the “mouse that roared” in the Internet marketplace. Macedonia recently made headlines when it became one of the first countries in the world to announce national wireless Internet access.

Now four of the country’s largest ISPs (Internet services providers) plus the owner of the .mk domain have signed Declarations on Information Safety, the first step in a wider initiative to combat cyber crime in this southeastern European country – and to get the country off the “Internet black list.”

The initiative is supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), a part of the U.S. mission in Macedonia through its Macedonia Competitiveness Activity (USAID/MCA). The objective of the declaration is to secure and offer higher quality Internet services and to protect customers from global Internet security threats.

This recent ISP declaration is an important step in combating fraud, crime and other Internet-based illegal activity. Macedonia and USAID’s efforts should serve as an example to other countries looking to maximize participation in the Internet community,” said Brian Cute, vice president, Public Policy, VeriSign, Inc.

Mountain View, California-based VeriSign, Inc. operates intelligent infrastructure services that enable and protect billions of interactions every day across the world’s voice and data networks. VeriSign’s Global Security Consulting team was engaged by USAID/MCA to gather information and conduct awareness workshops for Macedonian ISPs, financial institutions, Ministry of Internal Affairs, and Ministry of Justice. VeriSign identified multiple threats including bots and phishing.

The key consequence for Macedonia of cyber crime in the rest of Southeastern Europe is that Macedonia has an undeservedly poor reputation. “Macedonia’s recent security partnership between industry and government is an important component in building the country’s Internet reputation.” said Brian Costello, vice president, Global Security Consulting, VeriSign, Inc.

The workshops were among the first steps in the process to take Macedonia off the black list which prevents Macedonian (.mk) domain-based computer users to conduct online financial transactions with key providers such as eBay, PayPal and Skype. Costello noted that “Although the number of Internet based transactions coming out of Macedonia is relatively small today, the recent ISP security declaration will go a long way in improving global Internet community perceptions.”

Predrag Cemerikic, chief executive of On.net, a five-year-old ISP that recently made the country wireless, noted that “the initiative is essential to achieve international security standards for Macedonia to compete, offer and promote our products and services on the global Internet market.” On.net has recently received the “ISP of the Year Award for Outstanding Innovation” at the European Press and Analyst Summit 2006.

Marta Tomovska, chief executive officer of Unet, said, “The declaration is an essential first step to protect our customers’ information against unauthorized access so we can improve data integrity and introduce new services.” Unet was the first Macedonian ISP and is the only satellite communication provider in Macedonia. It focuses primarily on the enterprise market.

“By signing the declaration, AD Makedonski Telekomunikacii proves its strong commitment to the development of Macedonia as an e-Society and the dedication for gaining and maintaining the confidence of its customers by providing the necessary level of protection of Internet services and protection of personal customer,” said a representative of AD Makedonski Telekomunikacii, the largest ISP in the country.

“Once we announced that Neotel had signed the Declaration, we immediately received positive feedback from our clients. The banking sector, government institutions and insurance companies, which are some of our clients, showed their interest to bring our cooperation up to a higher level,” said Blagojce Dimeski, CEO of Neotel, one of the leading young companies for the new Internet technologies in the country.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

USAID has invested over \$450 million in Macedonia since 1993. Over 20 projects worth more than \$30 million a year are currently being implemented. These projects are supporting Macedonia’s transition to a free market-based, multi-ethnic democracy and are designed to accelerate economic growth, develop democratic institutions, and educate citizens for a competitive economy. To see more about what USAID is doing in Macedonia, please visit <http://macedonia.usaid.gov>

The goal of Macedonia Competitiveness Activity, USAID/Macedonia’s largest economic growth project, is to build the prosperity of the average citizen by helping Macedonian enterprises generate the vision and actions that will result in their increased competitiveness in domestic, regional and international markets. To learn more about USAID/MCA, please visit www.mca.org.mk

Signatories of individualized Declarations on Information Safety are: Marta Tomovska, Chief Executive Officer, Unet; Borislav Popovski, PhD, president of the Management Board of MarNet; (MarNet is unit of St. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, which owns the .mk domain); Attila Szendrei, Chief Executive Officer of Makedonski Telekomunikacii AD; Predrag Cemerikic, Chief Operating Officer, On.net; and Blagojce Dimeski, Chief Executive Officer , NeoTel.

Bots are compromised servers used to launch cyber attacks or send spam messages. Phishing is the mass distribution of “spoofed” email messages which appear to come from legitimate financial institutions and are designed to lure recipients to divulge personal information ranging from account names and passwords to credit card numbers.